

Lowering Food Assistance Program Error Rate and Improving Program Payment Accuracy

(FY2022 Appropriation Act - Public Act 87 of 2021)

March 1, 2022

Sec. 801. (1) *The department shall report monthly to the house and senate appropriations subcommittees on the department budget, the house and senate fiscal agencies, the house and senate policy offices, and the state budget office on the most recent food assistance program error rate derived from the active cases, reported to the United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Services for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.*

(2) By March 1 of the current fiscal year, the department shall report on the progress of the corrective action taken utilizing the funds appropriated for food assistance reinvestment in lowering the food assistance program error rate and improving program payment accuracy.



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1. *Payment Accuracy Related Staffing:*

Onboarding a Payment Accuracy Manager has resulted in the identification of the root causes of Food Assistance Program (FAP) payment errors and development of initiatives to mitigate those causes.

- Permanent Payment Accuracy Manager: **Hired February 2021**
- 4 Payment Accuracy Analysts: **Hired May 2021**
- Data Statistician: **Hired October 2021**
- Central Office Case Readers (10 Staff): **8 Hired, 2 In Process**

2. *Policy/Process Simplification:*

The policy simplification items are expected to reduce errors by streamlining processing, which allows staff to increase focus on error prone areas of eligibility determination.

- RFP for Policy Manual Simplification and Training: **Posted December 2021**

3. *Technology:*

Improvements to technology have assisted in addressing food assistance payment errors. The following technology changes helped address identified risk areas which were impacting accuracy.

- FAP Error Prone Screening: **Effective March 2021**
- Medicare Part B automation: **Effective June 2021**
- State Online Query (SOLQ) update: **Effective August 2021**
- Revised Interview Guide: **Effective January 2022**

4. *Case Reads:*

In fiscal year 2021 the department increased quality assurance activities including the requirement of case reading by various entities. This strategy has provided valuable data and insight to allow coaching and feedback for staff; as well as ensure consistency across the department.

- Established multiple levels of statewide case reads
 - Local Office- Initial reads
 - Business Service Center (BSC)- 2nd level reads
 - Central Office – Initial and 3rd level reads
- All reads and re-reads are logged in a database
- Reads with payment errors require a one-on-one learning and correction session between the specialist and the reader
- Central Office reads focus on Urban Partner Counties to provide additional support
- Approximately 4000 case reads per month

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5. Collaboration:

Staff from all levels meet routinely to engage in FAP centered discussion and to develop strategies to reduce the error rate.

- Upper Leadership FAP Accuracy Meeting (Bi-Weekly)
- FAP Accuracy Now (Twice per Month)
- FAP Accuracy Now Steering Committee (Monthly)
- FAP Urban Partner Steering Committee (Monthly)
- Standardization Workgroup (Monthly)
- BSC Directors (Quarterly)
- Local Office FAP work groups (Monthly)

Food and Nutrition Services virtual site visit

- Occurred 9/2021
- Local office Focus Groups conducted by FNS
- MDHHS presented current FAP Payment Accuracy initiatives and progress

Office of Workforce Development

- Ongoing facilitation of statewide virtual train the trainer sessions on FAP Accuracy topics bi-monthly
- Create and update training materials and job aids

6. Corrective Action Plans:

A new remediation activity was developed in fiscal year 2020, requiring local offices with an elevated error rate and multiple agency errors to complete a corrective action plan (CAP). The CAP strategy continued in fiscal year 2021. The plan requires an increased number of case reads and re-reads. The local office is also assigned additional training requirements and must participate in a monthly check-in with Economic Stability Administration. The increased case read volume combined with the additional training requirement provides specialists with more feedback to bolster their policy and processing knowledge. The three-month corrective action plans allow leadership to determine the root causes of errors in these offices and develop strategies to reduce those errors.

- 5 corrective action plans were assigned in FY2021
- Average CAP Results:
 - 26% **decrease** in the misissuance rate of Bureau of Audit compliance case reads
 - 9% **increase** in the accuracy rate of Central Office reads
 - 12% **increase** in the accuracy rate of Local Office reads

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7. Training:

The FAP Accuracy Manager and the Office of Workforce Development and Training have created different models of training which engage specialists and increase retention. The FAP Accuracy Now (FAN) group creates knowledge checks to determine and address training needs.

- Training and knowledge checks delivered throughout Calendar Year 2021

01/2021	Medical Expenses Quiz
02/2021	Self-Employment Training Income Dates and Budgeting Quiz
03/2021	Medical Expenses Training Child Support Quiz
04/2021	Student Status Training Child Support- Expenses Training and Quiz
05/2021	RSDI Benefits Training Case Comments/Documentation Quiz
06/2021	FAP Basic Bridges Budget Breakdown Training New Hires Quiz
07/2021	Child Support Income and Expense Training LIHEAP Supplement Training Redetermination Processing Quiz
08/2021	Simplified Reporting Training Self-Employment Quiz
09/2021	Prospective Income Budgeting Training and Quiz
10/2021	Miscellaneous (based on Local Office case read error trends) Training and Quiz

8. Improvements:

Progress was made in FY2021. The department reduced the misissuance rate for errors assigned to the department. Additionally, there was a reduction in the misissuance rate of total errors in key areas such as wages and salary, unemployment compensation, and RSDI benefits.

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